

10 Retail

1. Barnham Village centre and the main road through the village from its junction with Gospond Road (West) to that with Church Lane (East) are the main locations for the majority of retail activity within the villages. There are a couple of corner shops, one at the Eastergate war memorial roundabout and other at the junction of Lake Lane and Walberton Road and a small “out of Village” retail site at Parsonage Farm offering a variety of small independent outlets. In recent years village retail activity has been challenged by the draw of ‘edge-of-town’ retail parks, premium town centre precincts, internet shopping and economic austerity. This has created a very competitive trading environment for the villages shops and has resulted in an increase in the turnover of ownership and in the extension of non-occupation of vacant units.

2. **Arun's Local Plan strategic objective for town and village centres is:**

To create vibrant, attractive, safe and accessible towns and villages that build upon their unique characters to provide a wide range of uses and which are a focus for quality shopping, entertainment, leisure, tourism and cultural activities.

3. The Local Plan identifies a hierarchy of centres, policy SP6, giving the scope of activities promoted and envisaged within them. This includes retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development. The ranking of the centre is commensurate to (or a balanced measure of) its role in the community and the need to sustain its economic resilience.

4. The Local Plan ranks Barnham along with other smaller suburban and village centres, such as West Meads and East Preston, playing an important role in providing for day to day needs. By providing convenience shopping and community facilities such as post offices and health centres in locations which are easily accessible for local people, they give a focus for the community and help to reduce the need to travel.

5. **A critique of Barnham village centre activity highlights the following:**

The actual mix of shops within the village centre is heavily skewed toward the fast food take-away market. Although an economic bonus in one respect due to the trade including holidaying visitors, this is detrimental in two others; firstly these establishments operate for the majority of their open hours outside the normal trading hours of the conventional retail outlets so there is little or no cross-over of custom. Secondly at popular times they cause excessive traffic congestion through the village due to poor “pick-up” parking discipline.

6. Convenience shops by definition may be advocated as a community facility and therefore championed by all but empirically the spend per transaction is very low (“a pint of milk and a newspaper!”) which hinders long term viability and sustainability for the independents
7. There are two retail outlets that do appear to be enjoying relative success. The first is the Co-op in The Square which is a convenience store, but with a large product range and who operates extended hours and thus reaps the benefits of the regular “top-up” customers. The second retail outlet that also is a success within the village is the Trading Post which is a no frills independent store whose business model, which is similar to the “pile it high” & sell it cheap” mantra advocated by Tesco in their early days, has proved very popular with its broad customer base. The establishment also benefits from its easy access and convenient free parking.
8. Parsonage Farm’s “Windmill shopping village” is located under a mile away on the Yapton Road and currently comprises of 14 units offering a wide variety of products & services. It is not in easy walking distance from the main settlement therefore it is best reached by car. On site parking is available and free. The buildings, though quaint, look tired and temporary. The rear of the complex is occupied by a number of lock-up mizzen huts which do nothing to add to the character of the site. By observation foot fall is low and the retailers are struggling.
9. Overall “convenience” on its own is not the going to generate the economic wealth or guarantee the sustainability of retail in the village. The centre suffers from a lack of “destination”, that is, there is no definitive reason to go there, or stay there for any prolonged period of time. In fact the railway station is a more significant “destination” than the village centre and topping-up commuters probably account for a significant proportion of village centre custom. It is essential that the neighbourhood plan policies help to promote a successful form of retailing and with other policy safeguard the village centre.

10. Policy for Retail Development

Any Retail development within the village centre should accord with Arun DC’s hierarchy and will be supported by Barnham & Eastergate PC provided that:

It is of a high standard of design, materials and layout (including for access and crime prevention) and has due architectural regard for the existing building character, but can include scope for innovative enhancing design.

Proposals for retail (Use Class A1) will be supported. However where it can be demonstrated that a retail service satisfies an identified community need and its establishment would enhance the village centre’s “convenience and destination appeal” in accordance with Local Plan policy SP6 then such a proposal for a change of use to financial and professional services (Use Class A2) use will be positively considered.

Applications for further A3 uses (food & drink premises) will only be supported if it accords with Local Plan policy SP6 and there is a demonstrated tangible community benefit and / or “convenience and destination” enhancement.

11. Reuse of Redundant Floor space

Barnham & Eastergate will support proposals for the reuse of vacant floor space on the upper levels of retail units/blocks for residential, commercial or community purposes provided that:

A change of use will either add to the sustainability of the village centre or enhance the community amenity.

A change has no significant adverse effects for the occupiers of neighbouring properties; or any adversity is fully mitigated by appropriate measures and

There is no adverse effect on the levels of traffic congestion, convenient short term parking and road safety.

